SALEM WITCHCRAFT.

[The following are extracts from the records of the church in Danvers, lately under the care of the Rev. Benjamin Wadsworth, D. D., deceased, relative to the dissensions which were occasioned in that church by the prosecutions for witchcraft while the church was under the care of the Rev. Samuel Parris, and while it was within the bounds of Salem. They were copied by the Rev. Joseph B. Felt of Hamilton, in 1821, from the records at Dr. Wadsworth's house; and are portions that were not printed by Calef in his 3d Part. As may be seen on a perusal of them, there are some grammatical errors, and a few phrases not easily understood.]

This church was formed the 19th of November, 1689.

"27 *March, Sab.* 169½. *Sacrament day.* — After the common auditory was dismissed, and before the church communion at the Lord's Table, the follow-

ing testimony against the error of our sister, Mary Sibly, who had given direction to my Indian man in an unwarrantable way to find out witches, was read by the Pastor. It is altogether undeniable, that our great and blessed God, for wise and holy ends, hath suffered many persons in several families of this village, to be grievously vexed and tortured in body, and to be deeply tempted to the endangering of the destruction of their souls, and all these amazing feats (well known to many of us) to be done by witchcraft and diabolical operations. It is also well known, that when these calamities first began, which was in my own family, the affliction was several weeks before such hellish operations, as witchcraft, were suspected. Nay, it never brake forth to any considerable light until diabolical means was used, by the making of a cake by my Indian man, who had his direction from this our sister, Mary Sibly; since which apparitions have been plenty, and exceeding much mischief hath followed. But by this means (it seems) the Devil hath been raised amongst us, and his rage is vehement and terrible, and when he shall be silenced, the Lord only knows. But now that this our sister should be instrumental to such distress, is a great grief to myself, and our godly, honored, and reverend neighbours, who have had the knowledge of it. Nevertheless, I do truly hope and believe, that this our sister doth truly fear the Lord, and am well satisfied from her, that what she did, she did it ignorantly, from what she had heard of this nature from other ignorant or worse persons. Yet we are in duty bound to protest against such actions, as being indeed a going to the Devil for help against the Devil, we having no such directions from nature, or God's word; it must, therefore, be, and is accounted by godly Protestants, who write or speak of such matters, as diabolical, and therefore, call this our sister to deep humiliation for what she has done, and all of us

to be watchful against Satan's wiles and devices. Therefore, as we in duty, as a church of Christ, are deeply bound to protest against it, as most directly contrary to the Gospel, yet inasmuch, as this our sister did it in ignorance, as she professeth, and we believe, we can continue her in our holy fellowship upon her serious promise of future better advisedness and caution, and acknowledging, that she is indeed sorrowful for her rashness herein. Brethren, if this be your mind, that this inquity be thus borne witness against, manifest it by your usual sign of lifting up your hands. — The brethren voted generally. None made any exceptions.

" Sister Sibly, if you are convinced, that you herein did sinfully, and are sorry for it, let us hear it from your mouth. She did manifest to satisfaction her error and grief for it. Brethren, if herein you have received satisfaction, testify by lifting up your hands. A general vote passed. No exception made.

" Note. 25 *March*, 169$\frac{1}{2}$. I discoursed said sister in my study about the grand error above said, and also, then read to her what I had written as above to read to the church, and said sister Sibly assented to the same with tears and sorrowful confession.

" *Sabbath-day*, 14*th Aug.* 1692. The church was stayed after the congregation was dismissed, and the Pastor spoke to the church after this manner. — Brethren, you all have taken notice, that several Sacrament days past, our brother, Peter Cloyes, and Sam. Nurse and his wife, and John Tarbell and his wife, have absented [themselves] from Communion with us at the Lord's Table, yea, have very rarely, except our brother Samuel Nurse, been with us in common public worship ; now it is needful, that the church send some persons to them, to know the reason of their absence.

" Therefore, if you be so minded, express yourselves. — None objected ; but a general or universal

vote, after some discourse, passed, that Bro. Nathaniel Putman and the two Deacons should join with the Pastor to discourse with the said absenters about it."

"31*st August.* Bro. Tarbell proves sick, unfit for discourse. Bro. Cloyes hard to be found at home, being often with his wife in prison, at Ipswich for witchcraft, and Bro. Nurse and sometimes his wife attend our public meeting, and he the Sacrament. — 11*th September.* Upon all which, we choose to wait further.

"11*th September, Lord's day.* Sister Martha Kory, taken into the church 27th April 1690, was after examination upon suspicion of witchcraft, 21st March 169$\frac{1}{2}$ committed to prison for that fact, and was condemned to the gallows for the same yesterday; and was this day in public, by a general consent, voted to be excommunicated out of the church; and Lieut. Nathaniel Putman and the two Deacons [were] chosen to signify to her, with the Pastor, the mind of the church herein. Accordingly this 14th September 1692, the aforesaid brethren went with the Pastor to her in Salem prison, whom we found very obstinate, justifying herself, and condemning all, that had done any thing to her just discovery or condemnation; whereupon, after a little discourse (for her imperiousness would not suffer much), and after prayer (which she was willing to decline), the dreadful sentence of excommunication was pronounced against her."

"*Sabbath, 5 February* 169$\frac{2}{3}$. In the evening, the church was stayed, and upon discourse, the Pastor and two deacons, and Bro. Nathaniel Putman, and Bro. John Putman sen., and Bro. Bray Wilkin's wife, [were] chosen by a general vote of the Brotherhood, to discourse with brother Thomas Wilkins, Bro. Samuel Nurse, and Bro. John Tarbell, about their withdrawing of late from the Lord's Table, and public worship of God among us.

7th February 169$\frac{2}{3}$. The abovesaid brethren, chosen for debate with the abovementioned brethren, met about one o'clock at the Pastor's house; and after prayer, the Pastor applied himself to the three dissenting brethren, telling them, that we were appointed by the church, to inquire into the grounds of their declining religious communion with us of late. After some pause, they each one, one after another, desired further time to consider of our demands. The Pastor replied, You know, brethren, of your dissent, and doubtless, *you* cannot be to seek of the reasons of it. But after some words more, some of us looking upon such pleas needless, others being willing to concede to them, it was concluded, that they should meet us again the 16th inst., and then give in their reasons; and also, if they saw good, to bring their dissenting wives with them, or to leave them to another season, as they pleased, with this proviso, that they acquaint the Pastor timely of it, that he may acquaint the church likewise, that so we may be commissioned to treat with them also, for as yet we were only sent to the brethren, and not to the sisters.

"16*th February* 169$\frac{2}{3}$. According to the aforesaid, we, the abovesaid, met again at the Pastor's house, to receive answer from the dissenting brethren abovesaid, as to the reasons of their dissent; when they gave in a paper containing the matter following, viz. — Whereas we, Thomas Wilkins, and John Tarbell, and Samuel Nurse, having a long time gone under the burden of great grievances, by reason of some unwarrantable actings of Mr. Parris, as we esteem them, and were proceeding in an orderly way to obtain satisfaction from him, and had taken some steps thereunto, according to the advice of some neighbouring elders. But obstructive to our proceeding therein, Mr. Parris and some brethren of the church, were appointed by the church, to demand

a reason of us of our withdrawing from communion. The regularity of which, the proceeding, we do not understand, because in this case, we esteem ourselves to be plaintiffs and parties offended, and in an orderly way, seeking satisfaction, tho' hitherto denied. Our answer to the church is, that we esteem ourselves hereby prevented in our duty, which we account a grievance, seeing we were first in prosecution of the rule of our Lord Jesus Christ, laid down in Matth. 18 c. 15, 16 vs. Wherefore, if the church give us the liberty and freedom of attending our duty, as according to rule bound, possibly then further trouble may be prevented, or otherwise, the case will necessarily and regularly come before them. But if they deny us the request, we shall, as in duty bound, give the reasons of our proceeding to the church, or any others, when orderly demanded. The paper abovesaid was read to us by Samuel Nurse, they were altogether unwilling to leave it with us; but at length they were prevailed with to let us take a copy of it. I gave it to Dea. Putman, who desired a copy of it, and from his copy, I wrote as abovesaid. These displeased brethren were told, that they did ill to reflect on the church, who, as also the Pastor, were ignorant of their methods; and also, that they should first have spoken with the Pastor himself, before they went to consult neighbouring Elders. But to this last, they pleaded ignorance. So we gave way to their request of proceeding orderly.

"The 7*th February* last, before the brethren appointed by the church, came, the abovesaid three brethren, John Tarbell, Samuel Nurse, and Thomas Wilkins, came to my house, desiring speech with me; so I took them singly into my study, except Thomas Wilkins, for the other two, each of them, had taken up so much time, viz. one an hour at least, and the other more, that before time could be allowed for the other, the appointed breth-

ren came. John Tarbell said, he thought I was guilty of Idolatry, in asking the *afflicted persons*, whom they saw on other *afflicted persons*. He thought it was going to the God of Ekron. Nor did he understand how my oath was safe in court, that such and such, by such and such, were knocked down by their looks, and raised up by their touches.

"And had it not been for me, his mother Nurse might have been still living, and freed from execution; that I had been the great prosecutor, and that others, wise and learned, who had been as forward as myself, had been sorry for what they had done, and saw their error, and until I did so, he could not join. His brother, Samuel Nurse, for about an hour's time, had the same objections. I answered them, I did not see yet sufficient grounds to vary my opinion, which was confirmed by known and ancient experience, frequent in such cases, &c. But, however, in matters of debate they must give me my opinion, as I would not quarrel with them for theirs, &c.

"The 8*th February*, Brother Peter Cloyes came from Boston to me, with the very same objections, whom I answered after the like manner. Some short time after this, the abovesaid four displeased brethren came again desiring to speak with me, and Bro. William Way along with them. I told them, I would go up to my study, asking which would go first; so Brother Cloyes came up first, bringing Bro. Way and Thomas Wilkins with him, as witnesses to his demand of satisfaction to what he lately objected. I told him, there was but one brother, there should be two, Thomas Wilkins was in this case Peter Cloyes, and Peter Cloyes Thomas Wilkins; and so I told the rest, when I saw what they aimed at, and advised them to take, according to rule, some other brother or brethren, besides brother Way, or else I could not hear them in the way they aimed at. But

they would urge, that this was enough, and one was sufficient. I answered that Christ's rule was for two or three. So they departed.

"27*th March*, 169$\frac{2}{3}$. At night Bro. Cloyes, and Bro. Tarbell abovesaid, came to my house together with Mr. Joseph Hutchinson, Sen., and Mr. Joseph Putman, and a little after, William Osburn of Salem, (which three last, it seems, came for witnesses, as Bro. Cloyes owned the 20th April following) and they gave me a paper, not subscribed by any person, but a cut in the place of subscription, where two or three names might be written.

"The contents of the paper were as follows, viz. — The paper had no date neither. — To our pastor and minister, Mr. Samuel Parris of Salem Village, and to some others of the Plantation. We whose names are underwritten, being deeply sensible, that those uncomfortable differences that are amongst us, are very dishonourable to God and a scandal to religion, and very uncomfortable to ourselves, and an ill example to those, who may come after us. And by our maintaining and upholding differences amongst us, we do but gratify the Devil, the grand adversary to our souls. For the removal of which, we have thought meet to proffer our present thoughts to your serious consideration, hoping, that there may be such methods propounded, as may be for the settling and confirming peace and unity amongst us, both at the present and for the future. And our desires are, that such a foundation may be laid for peace and truth; that the gates of hell may not prevail against it. And, in order thereunto, Solomon adviseth to counsel. And our desires are, that a council of elders may be mutually chosen to hear all our grievances between Mr. Parris and us, and to determine where the blameable cause is. And we hope, that their wisdom and prudence may direct us to such a method, as may be for our comfort for both present

and future. When I had read it, I asked them, whom this paper came from. They answered, all the plantation, or a great many of them at least. I demanded, why then did none subscribe it. They said, all in good time.

So I put it up in my pocket. They demanded an answer to it. I told them, I would consider of it.

28*th March* 1693. The abovesaid brethren, together with the said Hutchinson, came again at night for an answer to the abovesaid paper. I told them, I had not considered of it yet.

14*th April* 1693. Our displeased brethren, John Tarbell, Samuel Nurse, and Thomas Wilkins, came again, bringing with them said Hutchinson and Francis Nurse. After a little while, I went down from my study to them, asking them if they would speak with me. They said, yes, they came to discourse about the paper (abovesaid), they had brought to me. I told them, I had no time to talk, I was this day to preach to a private meeting. Nor was I willing to discourse with them alone; but appoint time and place, and I would meet with them. So we agreed, after our next lecture, to meet at Bro. Nathaniel Putman's.

20*th April.* After lecture, myself, Captain Putman, Ensign Flint, and the two Deacons, met the four displeased brethren abovesaid at Lieut. Nathaniel Putman's abovesaid, where we found together with them and for them, said Mr. Hutchinson and Mr. Israel Porter. After a little while, I told them, to gratify them, I was come to hear what they had to offer. They demanded an answer to the paper abovesaid. Whereupon I pluckt it out of my pocket, and read it openly. They owned that to be the paper. I asked them what they called it; they being to seek a name for it. I told them, I looked upon it as a libel. They then produced a like paper, subscribed by said brethren and divers more, to the num-

ber of forty and two names; but all seemed to be one and the same hand. I desired the original paper. They said, they knew not where it was. Then it was asked, whether those men wrote their own names. It was answered, yes, or they were written by their order. Then I desired them to subscribe this paper with their hands to it, testifying, that no name was there, but such as had consented thereto. But none would yield to this. Then I told them, we must know what to do. Had I to do with displeased people, or displeased brethren? They answered, they came as brethren. Then I told them, none but brethren should have been present. They said, they had been with me already, and I refused to give them satisfaction. I answered, I did not understand they had. When they came first, I did not understand their drift, and therefore did not discourse them, as I would have done, had I apprehended they came to reason as such as had taken offence. And when they came the second time, they brought but one brother, viz. William Way, and took others of themselves. Lieut. Putman said, it was not too late yet, now there were several of the brethren present, and they might take any two of them, and discourse with the Pastor. No, they said, they had done it already. Thus much time was spent till just night, and myself and other brethren upon going home. The four displeased brethren agreed to meet me to-morrow morning about an hour after sunrise, with the two Deacons, and Bro. William Way, and Bro. Aaron Way, to discourse the matter, to which I readily assented.

21*st April* 1693. This morning, we met as abovesaid at Deacon Ingersoll's. After a little while, I began with prayer. Then brother Nurse read a large scroll of about fifteen articles, as reasons why they withdrew communion from us. Seven of them, I think, were reasons of absenting from public wor-

ship with us, and the other eight, I think, causes of separation from my ministry. I desired to see them, but was denied for a great while. At length, I had liberty to read them myself, upon the promise of returning them to them. After all, I demanded them, or a copy of them. But they would not consent thereto, nor to the desire of the other four indifferent brethren, tho' we urged it by arguments. But the dissenters said, no. They had told me, and that was enough; and they desired me to call the church, and then I should have all."

[N. B. Thus far Mr. Felt copied verbatim the Rev. Mr. Parris's account of his difficulties; but, as they are prolix, he made only the following abstract of the residue.]

Sab. 30th April 1693. A church meeting was proposed. *18th May.* It was held. The displeased brethren appeared with their complaints; but it was voted, that they had proceeded disorderly; and that the church would hear these brethren, if they would bring their charges in an orderly manner.

[The following is copied verbatim.] *13th October* 1693. "I received a letter from the Rev. Mr. John Higginson, directed to myself and brethren of this church. The sum whereof was, to advise us to join the complainants in calling a council of neighbouring churches, not excepting against any one on either side. Which letter, he writes, was occasioned by another letter, received from Mr. Willard in the name of the elders of Boston, directed to him, and Mr. Noyes, and Mr. Hale, to desire him to persuade us so to do. Communicated the same letter, this day, to sundry of the brethren at a private meeting at Deacon Ingersoll's."

"*14th October* 1693. I received a letter from Rev. Mr. Hale and Mr. Noyes, directed to myself and church, of the same tenor for substance with the abovesaid of Mr. Higginson's, only herein were sev-

eral conditions, on which a council should be chosen, omitted in that."

[The following are abstracts.] *Sab.* 15*th October*, Church meeting appointed to consider the advice of the letters, and the petitions of the displeased brethren to General Court, and several remote churches.

19*th October* 1693. Church met, and agreed to have a mutual council.

23*d October* 1693. A letter was sent to the Rev. Messrs. Higginson, Noyes, and Hale, stating that the church had agreed to a council. It was signed by Rev. S. Parris, with consent of the brethren of the church.

Salem, June 14*th* 1694. As there was a difficulty in executing the vote for a mutual council, the following ministers sent advice of the above date to the church by all means to have a council to settle their troubles. John Higginson, James Allen, John Hale, Samuel Willard, Samuel Cheever, Nicholas Noyes (signed on condition that he should not be one of the council), Joseph Gerrish.

September 10*th* 1694. Similar advice was repeated by five of the preceding ministers, Mr. Noyes's name not subscribed under it.